

## Readings for Thursday the 26<sup>th</sup> Week of the Year

FIRST READING: Job 19:21-27

A reading from the Book of Job:

Job said: Pity me, pity me, O you my friends, for the hand of God has struck me! Why do you hound me as though you were divine, and insatiably prey upon me? Oh, would that my words were written down! Would that they were inscribed in a record: That with an iron chisel and with lead they were cut in the rock forever! But as for me, I know that my Vindicator lives, and that he will at last stand forth upon the dust; Whom I myself shall see: my own eyes, not another's, shall behold him, And from my flesh I shall see God; my inmost being is consumed with longing.

The word of the Lord.

RESPONSORIAL: Psalm 27:7-8a, 8b-9abc, 13-14

***I believe that I shall see the good things of the Lord in the land of the living.***

Hear, O LORD, the sound of my call; have pity on me, and answer me. Of you my heart speaks; you my glance seeks.

***I believe that I shall see the good things of the Lord in the land of the living.***

Your presence, O LORD, I seek. Hide not your face from me; do not in anger repel your servant. You are my helper: cast me not off.

***I believe that I shall see the good things of the Lord in the land of the living.***

I believe that I shall see the bounty of the LORD in the land of the living. Wait for the LORD with courage; be stouthearted, and wait for the LORD.

***I believe that I shall see the good things of the Lord in the land of the living.***

Gospel: Luke 10:1-12

+ A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke:

Jesus appointed seventy-two other disciples whom he sent ahead of him in pairs to every town and place he intended to visit. He said to them, "The harvest is abundant but the laborers are few; so ask the master of the harvest to send out laborers for his harvest. Go on your way; behold, I am sending you like lambs among wolves. Carry no money bag, no sack, no sandals; and greet no one along the way. Into whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace to this household.' If a peaceful person lives there, your peace will rest on him; but if not, it will return to you. Stay in the same house and eat and drink what is offered to you, for the laborer deserves his payment. Do not move about from one house to another. Whatever town you enter and they welcome you, eat what is set before you, cure the sick in it and say to them, 'The Kingdom of God is at hand for you.' Whatever town you enter and they do not receive you, go out into the streets and say, 'The dust of your town that clings to our feet, even that we

shake off against you.’ Yet know this: the Kingdom of God is at hand. I tell you, it will be more tolerable for Sodom on that day than for that town.”

The Gospel of the Lord.

### **Reflection for Thursday the 26<sup>th</sup> Week of the Year**

Reading the book of Job can be a tedious endeavor. It is full of horrific scenes of death, destruction and suffering. Job and his wife endure it all. Basically the story asks why bad things happen to good people. I’ve read the book on a number of occasions. I still cannot answer the question why. Not only does Job endure the death of all his children, the destruction of his home and the loss of his wealth, he has to endure his well meaning and intrusive friends who accuse him of secret sins. The friends subscribe to the notion that bad things can only happen to bad people. The monologues of all the characters in the story can be long and boring. Most people have never read the book.

The story begins with a dialogue between Satan and God. Satan is portrayed not as the beastly devil but as the accuser of humanity. He digs up all the dirt on people to be used for their judgment. God first compliments Job as a good and faithful man, his favorite. Satan tells God that Job is so because of the many blessing God has given to him. Take away the blessing and Job will curse God. God says no he won’t; Satan says yes he will. Satan and God enter into a bet. In a day Job loses everything leaving him sitting on a dung-heap scraping boils with a broken potsherd. God and Satan kill Job’s children and livestock. A storm blows away Job’s home and farm. This is not a pleasant story.

Job never curses God directly. Job eventually curses the day he was born. Who was responsible for Job’s birth aside from his parent? God was. Job winds up cursing God indirectly. In the end God lost the bet. Job never knew how all his trials began; we do.

The book of Job culminates in a powerful scene when Job turns to God to ask why he suffered so. God speaks to Job out of the whirlwind. God answers Job’s question with a non-answer. I am God and you are Job. You can never know or understand me. God does not restore what Job lost but give Job new children, home and wealth. What was lost and dead will never return.

Somehow I find the story quite unsatisfying on one level, brutal and nasty on another. However it speaks to some of the deepest experiences we all have. Our western United States is afire destroying people’s lives, property, forest and wildlife. Our society faces bigotry and violence. The world is besieged with a pandemic. A million people have died as a result. People seem to be more concerned with their personal right not to wear a mask in public as opposed to wearing one for the sake of our common good. We are as surrounded by chaos and death as was Job. All of us want to know why.

Like Job, there is no satisfying answer. How can we know the mind of God when we have trouble knowing our own minds and motives? The book of Job ended with life going on for Job. It did until Job died. It will for us too, until each of us dies. The better question, one we can answer, can be what does it mean? On one level we put one foot in front of the other and push on. On another how can we adapt to life as it is? How can our attitudes and behavior toward

other people change? What can I do to keep myself, my family and my community safe? Life is for the living to live.

Job turned to God throughout the story. He expressed his pain and grief to God. He even confronted God at the end. When Job did those things he prayed. God did not add to his woes, punish or kill him. Job endured and continued to thrive because he turned to God in all things. On this level the message of this book is powerful. For us there is a lesson. God will listen to all our woe; accept our bewilderment, fears and outrage. Jesus took all these things and died for them. Being honest before God can free us to live.

Having said this, Jesus tells his disciples and through them us, if rejected or ridiculed to shake the dust from our feet before we move on. Why does he say this? Jesus also adds the admonishment that it will go badly for them in the Kingdom of God. That's what we hear, but Jesus meant more. The early Church grew through missionary preaching and witness. The apostles were ignored, beaten and killed. If the missionaries clung to that, the Church could never grow. We wouldn't be believers and members of the Church. At the heart of Jesus' words is forgiveness.

When we seek our tormenters' punishment the pain and outrage of our treatment can cling to us more. Jesus advises his disciple to let go of those feelings in the moment and move on. This is part of the process of forgiveness. We need to let the pain and anger go. Forgiveness frees us not the perpetrators. Most of the time people are as oblivious to our hurt as we can be with theirs. My anger is always my own. My back hurts me not you. With God's grace, I can let my feelings go and entrust them to God. I can also entrust those who have hurt me to God at the same time. We all need God's grace to change not God's threats.

The gospel began as Jesus enjoined the disciples to pray for God to send more workers. From where will those workers come? You and I are already disciples; they will come from those whom we entrust to God. Those include people who have hurt us. I believe that Saul was transformed into Paul because of the believers entrusting him to God through prayer. It happened as a surprise as Saul crested the hill as he approached Damascus on his way to persecute the Church. Paul became St. Paul upon his death. Scripture gives witness that Jesus' advice works.

God was always an integral part of Job. God was with him in his sorrow and pain. God did not intervene to restore Job's loss. God's grace enabled Job to continue living. The Church thrives from Jesus' time until now. We have endured the chaos of today. We gather in Jesus' name as we are. We will offer our selves to God as we offer then receive what God has offered us; Jesus, his son. In this way God is integral to each of us.

May God bless you as we keep one another safe.

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